added pepper to United States during 2005-06 has in fact increased from 2580 metric tonnes in 2004-05 to 3062 metric tonnes in 2005-06. However, the global export of cashew decreased in 2005-06 to 1.14 lakh metric tonnes from 1.26 lakh metric tonnes in 2004-05.

(b) The marginal decrease in the export of cashew has been due to increased competition from Vietnam and sluggish international markets. For boosting export of cashewnut, the Cashew Export Promotion Council of India, Kochi is undertaking several export promotion programmes under various schemes of the Government of India. Cashew exporters from all over the country are eligible to avail assistance under these schemes.

Production of Cardamom

3362. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the unremunerative price of cardamom in the year 2005-06 has forced down growers to scale down agricultural inputs;

(b) if so, whether there is any proposal to enhance the subsidies for replanting, new planting, irrigation facilities and rain water harvesting facilities;

(c) if so.whether steps will be taken to introduce subsidies for fertilizers and pesticides through Spices Board; and

(d) the steps taken to maintain the production of the crop in the light of the decline in cardamom prices?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINSTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) No, Sir. Although, there was a decline in the price of cardamom in the year 2005-06 as compared to 2004-05, there is no reported scaling down of agricultural inputs and cultural operations in general in the cardamom plantations due to decline in the prices of cardamom.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

(d) The following developmental schemes are implemented by the Spices Board for maintaining the production of the crop:

- Production of planting materials through Departmental Nurseries and Certified nurseries by growers with the assistance of the Board.
- Cardamom Replanting Scheme; Rs 9,000/- per hq. subsidy
- Water Harvesting Scheme; 25-50% subsidy.
- Improved cardamom curing devices; 33.33% subsidy.
- Rain Water Harvesting Scheme; 33.33% subsidy.

Steps to Increase Rubber Production

3363. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether rubber output is very less compared to consumption;

(b) if so, whether any action has been taken to increase rubber output;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) No Sir. The production of Natural Rubber (NR) has been increasing. However, the consumption of NR is also on the increase and at times it outpaces production. During the year 2005-06, the production of NR has been slightly more than consumption.

(b) to (d) The Govt, of lndia through the Rubber Board is implementing the Ruber Plantation Development Scheme to increase the production and productivity of NR in the country. Under the scheme, financial incentives and technical assistance is provided for new planting and replanting. Rubber cultivation has been extended to non-traditional regions and a separate scheme for the development of Rubber Plantations in the North Eastern Region is also being implemented.

Tea/Coffee Plantation in Assam

3364. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government plan a series of initiatives to boost tea/coffee